

## **‘You’re Hired!’ 13 of London’s top candidates beat off competition in the ‘real life’ apprentice**

**Fearne Cotton and Skills Minister David Lammy congratulate best of London’s apprentices, employers and education providers**

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You may think that Wednesday night’s episode of *the Apprentice* on BBC 1 put the contestants through their paces, but that’s nothing compared to the hurdles that this year’s competitors for the 2008 Skills for London Awards have overcome.

Being a real-life apprentice is tougher than the reality-TV version and this year’s winners of the Skills for London Awards proved that they had more than just the ‘gift of the gab’ or the ability to sell wedding cake.

Over 100 candidates from across London battled it out to win today’s accolades which recognised the top apprentices, businesses, and skills providers from across the capital.

Unlike Sir Alan Sugar’s apprentices, these contestants have completed gruelling training courses and will not get a six figure salary straightaway, but they have all secured qualifications which will enable them to get higher paid jobs and move up the career ladder. Top businesses also slogged it out to prove that they provide the best on-the-job training available for their staff to help their businesses succeed.

TV presenter Fearne Cotton and Skills Minister David Lammy MP revealed the 13 ‘hired’ contestants to a packed audience of over 350 people from the education and skills sector.

The 13 winners of this year’s ‘real life’ apprentice competition included single parent Julianna Alli, who supported her three and a half year old son on just £80 a week whilst taking an Apprenticeship in Business Administration. She won the much feted Personal

Achiever of the Year Award and her teacher said of her: "Julianna is a real inspiration to young people and is able to be a shining example to them through her line of work at Connexions in Woolwich".

Julianna said: "Winning this award it means everything. Up until today, I didn't think I would win it until they called my name and I realised that Wow! I'm just going to go forward and tell everyone about it, especially the people I know that work with young people in Connexions to tell them that they can do it, because I've done it".

Another candidate for the Train to Gain Learner of the Year Award, Diana Bruce-Chin, is still learning at the ripe old age of 70 and walks 4 miles to and from the St Michaels Day Nursery each day, where she helps care for young babies. She is living proof that it really is never too late to learn.

Diana said: "I would like to thank my assessor, my director and my manager. I feel great about being a finalist because it's not only for me it's for the nursery. It's given me more commitment to the children and I've learned a lot through the training".

Contestants such as these were pitted against the big guns like BT who won the Apprenticeship Large Employer of the Year Award for the second year running for their Apprenticeship programme through which they train 10% of their workforce. Also, Axima Building Services, who won Apprenticeship Medium Employer of the Year Award.

Brian Woodcraft, Managing Director of Axima Building Services based in Docklands said: "This prize is hugely important and I feel very proud. We put a lot of time and effort into our training programmes, particularly Apprenticeships but also other training for older staff. We have to bring skilled people through the industry, we like to think that we bring through some of the best and ultimately it reflects on our bottom line because we have some of the best skilled tradesmen in the industry".

Candidates like the Royal Hospital for Neuro-Disability, Coffee Snobs and building firm Leary Brothers were recognised for the outstanding work they do to develop bespoke learning solutions for their staff.

Two Polish women, Katarzyna Brzezinska and Iwona Zamojska overcame language barriers to learn English whilst also gaining NVQ's in Health and Social Care and Skills for Life qualifications respectively.

Katarzyna said: "I am very proud about this award. I feel great, I didn't expect to win. I am very happy about it. My company has given me a lot of support and I've learned a lot from them so it's great that they have got acknowledgement like this".

This year, for the first time, training providers were also recognised. Sue Gidman from TBG Learning, Provider of the Year said: "We are absolutely delighted, it means so much to all of our staff and to all of our learners which are 30,000 in a year and we are providing services for people that perhaps wouldn't have ordinarily have achieved without the help of people like us".

LSC Regional Director for London, David Hughes, said:

"Sir Alan Sugar would be impressed by our award winners and candidates; he might even want to hire some of them. They are all bright, intelligent and highly motivated people who have gained vocational skills which will stand them in good stead in today's competitive business world. This year's contestants prove that Further Education is now really the training ground for creating the skilled workforce England needs to remain competitive".

Speaking at the event, Skills Minister David Lammy MP said:

"I am pleased to see so many talented, self-motivated people here today. It shows how much can be achieved when employers provide individuals with opportunities to reach their full potential. Through Apprenticeships and Train to Gain we are giving employers and individuals the support to find the right training to meet their business skills

needs. The new skills that these learners bring to their organisations will not only improve their business but the economy as a whole.”

Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, said:

“I am pleased that there is a general consensus across business and government that training and skills development are essential to both tackling worklessness and developing smooth running efficient organisations. That is why these awards are so important to recognise and showcase what excellent work is being undertaken at all levels and encourage all employers to ensure skills and training are at the top of the list of business objectives.”

The events key sponsor was Knapp Goodwin, a marketing design and events company that applies a wide range of skills to client projects. Chairman Geoff Knapp was very vocal in his support for training:

“With the right encouragement and teaching we can all turn potential into success and make an impact on any business” he said. The winners of the 2008 LSC awards have demonstrated a commitment to developing their people and we are proud to help recognise those achievements.”

The Skills for London Awards 2008 were held at London’s Royal Opera House in Covent Garden today. The awards, organised by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) celebrate the achievements of learners and businesses across London, who have undertaken Apprenticeships or other further education skills training.

*Full details of all the finalists and winners are available along with photography from the event.*

-Ends-

## **Notes to Editors**

The winners of the 2008 Skills for London Awards are:

### **Apprenticeship Employer of the Year** (sponsored by LearnDirect Business)

- Small Employer - George Fraser
- Medium Employer - Axima Building Services
- Large Employer – BT

**Young Apprentice of the Year** (sponsored by Full On and Loud Magazine) - Luke Power

**Apprentice of the Year** (sponsored by Choice e-prospectus) - **Asad Ahmed**

**Advanced Apprentice of the Year** (sponsored by XL Magazine) - Aline Cornu

**Personal Achiever of the Year** (sponsored by Kiss 100) - Julianna Alli

**Train to Gain Employer of the Year** (sponsored by Knapp Goodwin)

- Small Employer - Leary Brothers & Ream Partnership
- Medium Employer – Coffee Snobs Ltd
- Large Employer – The Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability

**Train to Gain Learner of the Year** (sponsored by Kiss 100) - Katarzyna Brzezinska

**Skills for Life Learner of the Year** (sponsored by Get On) - Iwona Zamojska

**Training Provider of the Year** (sponsored by Prevista) - TBG Learning Ltd

The judging panel comprised:

- Rod Kenyon, Director, Centrica
- Ali Kaye, Director, Work Based Learning Alliance
- Chris Heaume, Chief Executive, Central London Connexions
- Stephen Evans, Director of People, Skills and Employment, LDA
- Tony Evans, Policy Advisor, GLA
- Sue Parker, Regional Director, AOC London
- Ruth Lomax, Assistant Director – Marketing and Communications, Hackney Community College
- Ann Lines, Head of Olympic Delivery Team, Jobcentre Plus
- Tristan Wallace, Skillset

### **Learning and Skills Council (LSC)**

The LSC exists to make England better skilled and more competitive. It is responsible for ensuring the availability of high-quality education and training for everyone. It has a single goal: to improve the skills of England's young people and adults to world class standards. Its vision is that young people and adults in England have knowledge and skills matching the best in the world and are part of a truly competitive workforce. It works nationally, regionally and locally to deliver this ambition on behalf of learners and employers [www.lsc.gov.uk/london](http://www.lsc.gov.uk/london)

**Skills for London**

For more information on skills or the awards visit [www.skillsforlondon.org](http://www.skillsforlondon.org)

**Train to Gain**

Train to Gain is a service from the Learning and Skills Council, helping businesses get the training they need to succeed. For more information visit: <http://www.traintogain.gov.uk/>

**Apprenticeships**

Apprenticeships are nationally designed training programmes for those who have already left full time education or are already in employment. They provide a combination of on and off-the-job training whilst being paid. For more information visit <http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk/>

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